

***Rep. Gonzalez Issues Statement Applauding Passage***

**Washington, DC** - This evening, Congressman Charles Gonzalez (TX-20) applauded the passage of HR 2206, the US Troops Readiness, Veterans' Care, Katrina Recovery, and Iraq Accountability Appropriations Act. The legislation authorizes defense spending in Iraq, but fences \$52.8 billion of the President's requested \$95.5 billion. The bill dictates that Congress would vote to release the remaining funds in July, after the President submits to Congress a status report on progress made by the Iraqi government in meeting mandated benchmarks.

The bill also contains provisions that would fund key domestic priorities, including \$3.1 billion to fully fund the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) recommendations and \$1.8 billion for veterans' medical care - two programs whose funds were vetoed by President Bush.

Rep. Gonzalez issued the following statement on the passage of HR 2206:

"Congress will not irresponsibly deliver a blank check that the White House has requested. Rather, and as we've already done in the past, the House has passed legislation that strongly supports our troops by ensuring that they have necessary resources. Concurrently, this bill provides a sensible and responsible plan to bring our troops home," said Gonzalez.

"The American people spoke loud and clear last November when they demanded a new direction in Iraq. It's now time for President Bush to join Congress in answering their call by bringing this war to an end, not escalating it," said Gonzalez.

"The sectarian violence in Iraq can only be solved by the Iraqi people, and there is nothing that our troops, be it 35,000 or 350,000, can achieve that has not already been accomplished. Our brave men and women have done all that has been asked of them, but it is unreasonable and irresponsible to continue asking them to solve a problem that can only be resolved by the Iraqi people," said Gonzalez.

"As evident by the passage of this legislation, Congress will continue the fight to provide what President Bush has failed to offer - a reasonable and responsible plan to bring our troops home," he added.

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